

The voice of the Father at Jesus' baptism and the temptation in 4:1-13 attested that Jesus is the Son of God.

Luke 4:14-30 shows that Jesus is the one upon whom the Spirit of God rests, and the one who fulfills the prophecies about God's Servant. The section begins with Jesus announcing who He is by means of the prophecy in Isaiah, and then revealing who He is through the mighty works He performs in delivering the outcasts and the oppressed.

4: 14 And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district.

4: 15 And He began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all.

Jesus didn't return from the temptations in the wilderness as a limping survivor, depleted and exhausted, but as the spiritually empowered righteous one who had been vindicated by God (Edwards, 133).

The Greek imperfect tense ἐδίδασκεν ("he was teaching") connotes the central role that teaching played in Jesus' ministry. Moderns are often more impressed by acts of compassion or ministries of "presence" than they are by teaching and preaching. In Luke's theology of the word, teaching and proclamation are the essential forms of divine revelation. A good deed, even a miracle, can be misunderstood; and even if properly understood may not evoke a commitment (Edwards 133, 134).

Jesus habitually went to the synagogue on the Sabbath. A "synagogue" need not mean a building; rather, a synagogue was the gathering of people in a town or village in a predetermined location. The synagogue originated during the exile when the Jews met together for prayer and the reading of the Torah. In Jesus' day synagogues were found everywhere pockets of Jews lived, and became an enduring institution in Judaism. Both Jesus and Paul took advantage of the invitation to be guest speakers and teach at them.

The events that Luke chooses to write about take place in Nazareth where Jesus had been raised as a child. Luke sticks to the same pattern that he had established in the birth narrative – a citation of an OT promise followed by the identification of its fulfillment.

Ministry and Rejection at Nazareth - Luke 4:16-30

4:16 And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read.

4:17 And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written,

4:18 "THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED,

4:19 TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD."

4:20 And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him.

If the format of later synagogue services was the same as that in Jesus' day, the service would have commenced with prayer, followed by a reading from the law (the first five books of the OT). There were no pastors as we know them, so local authorities would ask people to read from other places in the scriptures, as well, and preach if they felt compelled to do so. The original Hebrew was read, and then translated into the spoken language (Aramaic) by either the reader or another person (Morris, 116). It was at that time that the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Jesus. Unrolling it, He found the place where it is written:

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (Luke 4:17-19, cf. Isa. 61:1 ff.)

Jesus then rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down.

"The year of the Lord's favor" is closely connected to the reign of God. It is the year for God to act. In 4:43, Jesus uses similar language to proclaim the good news: "I must preach the kingdom of God."

NOTE: Chiasm is found frequently in Scripture. Chiasm is the ordering of words so that the first is parallel to the last in thought; the second word is parallel to the second to the last, etc. By means of chiasm, the author is stressing what is at the center of His thought. Here, verses 16-20 form a chiasm and verse 18 is at the center.

- A Into the synagogue (16)
 - B He stood up to read (16)
 - C He was given the scroll (17)
 - D He unrolled the scroll (17)
 - E "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me" (18)**
 - D' He rolled the scroll up (18)
 - C' He gave the scroll back (20)
 - B' He sat down (20)
 - A' In the synagogue (20)

The passage Jesus read was a description of the work of Messiah, the Anointed One (cf. Lk. 3:22). The emphasis in the chiasm is on the fulfillment of this passage in Christ. The Messiah would preach good news of salvation, set the enslaved (by sin) free, give sight to the blind (both physically and spiritually), help the oppressed, and announce the era of salvation ("the year of the Lord's favor," i.e. the year that God would graciously reveal His salvation to man). This is what Jesus had come to do.

4:21 And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Everyone then waited expectantly for Him to give a sermon which was often delivered in a sitting, rather than a standing position (Marshall, 184). Jesus simply said, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." (Lk. 4:21). That is, He was proclaiming that the era of salvation was no longer a future event. God was acting now, bringing salvation in the person of Jesus. Jesus was the Anointed One of whom Isaiah the prophet had spoken.

However, there is something else that we must not overlook. When Jesus quoted Isaiah 61, He cut the passage short. The full passage reads as follows:

Isaiah 61:1 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, Because the LORD has anointed me To bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to captives And freedom to prisoners; 2 To proclaim the favorable year of the LORD And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn, 3 To grant those who mourn in Zion, Giving them a garland instead of ashes, The oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting. So they will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.

Why didn't Jesus finish verse 2? The answer is that He was revealing a mystery. That which was revealed in the OT as a single event was in reality a two-act drama. The OT prophets saw the favorable year of the Lord as a time period that included salvation and judgment; they didn't know that that "day" would be separated by centuries of time but Jesus did. In John 12:47-48 Jesus said, "If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day." The coming of Christ ushered in the acceptable year of the Lord, but this year (time period) began with a period of salvation. In 2 Corinthians 6:2 Paul says, "Behold, now is 'the acceptable time,' behold, now is 'the Day of Salvation.'"

We live in an age where we are experiencing the great patience of God. God withholds His judgment and offers full amnesty to rebellious hearts. But the day will come when this period ends and the latter half of Isaiah 61:2 will come to pass. Paul says in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 ". . . the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power."

NOTE:

Since Jesus quotes from Isaiah, not Leviticus, it is more likely that he is drawing on [the year of] Jubilee imagery to refer to the day of salvation. [Every 50th year was to be announced as a jubilee year. All real property should automatically revert to its original owner (Lev 25:10; compare 25:13), and those who, compelled by poverty, had sold themselves as slaves to their brothers, should regain their liberty (Lev 25:10; compare 25:39) ISBE] Paul uses the imagery in

2 Corinthians 6:2, quoting Isaiah 49:8, "in the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you" and declaring, "now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation." The Jubilee imagery is therefore intended to evoke images of eschatological redemption rather than social and political reform. Jesus announces the dawn of salvation with deliverance from Satan and the forgiveness of sins. (Garland, 200)

4:22 And all were speaking well of Him, and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips; and they were saying, "Is this not Joseph's son?"

Initially, Jesus won their approval and received a positive response to His comment. They were amazed that such words would come from the son of Joseph, someone they knew. But, their response also exposed their limited understanding of Jesus. Jesus was more than the son of Joseph; He was the son of God. He had just declared that He was the one spoken of in Isaiah who had ushered in the favorable year of the Lord, but the Jews had failed to believe Jesus at His word.

In the verses that follow Jesus confronts them on their unbelief and intentionally provokes them in order to reveal the true condition of their hearts. He does this by refusing to do a miracle in their midst, by uncovering their attitudes in two common proverbs, and by telling them of the results of their unbelief through two OT stories.

In order to understand verses 23-27 we need to read between the lines; we need to realize that Jesus saw their hearts and would not allow their superficial praises to stand unchallenged.

4:23 And He said to them, "No doubt you will quote this proverb to Me, 'Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we heard was done at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.'"

4:24 And He said, "Truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his hometown.

All were amazed at what Jesus said, but their amazement did not turn to faith for they did not take His words to heart. Like those in Cana (Jn. 4:45, 48), the people in Nazareth did not believe what Jesus had just said. They saw Him as the son of Joseph not as the fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah. Instead of believing Him they wanted Him to prove Himself by doing miracles; they wanted Jesus to do what He had done in Capernaum (4:23b). Jesus rebuked them with two common, widespread proverbs. He anticipated that when He refused to do a miracle to prove Himself they would no doubt say, "Physician, heal yourself!" (That is, "if you claim to be someone [the servant in Isaiah 61] than prove it - show your stuff!").

The second proverb, "no prophet is welcome in his hometown," states why Jesus was rejected. The people in His hometown could not think of Him in any greater way than what they knew of Him as He was growing up.

The people's mindset had dishonored Jesus (Lk. 4:24), for they had rejected the words of God's grace which had come from His lips. The era of salvation He had inaugurated was thus met with rejection by His own people (Jn. 1:11). Thus, what was to happen to those in Nazareth finds a parallel to Elijah and Elisha.

4:25 "But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land;

4:26 and yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow.

4:27 "And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian."

In Elijah's day, Israel was being judged for their worship of the idol Baal. Though Israel was in great need, Elijah was sent outside of the nation to minister to Gentiles (I Ki. 17:8 ff.). Likewise, the prophet Elisha did not bring healing to the many in Israel who were plagued with leprosy, but to one outside the nation – Naaman the Syrian (II Ki. 5). The two OT examples also illustrate what Jesus had said in verse 19; they were beneficiaries of the Lord's favor. Those in Nazareth would not receive the blessing Christ had spoken of just as Israel had failed to receive God's blessing, for Jesus would go elsewhere. Salvation was not an exclusive right of the Jews; it would spread to the ends of the earth.

4:28 And all the people in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things;

4:29 and they got up and drove Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff.

4:30 But passing through their midst, He went His way.

Such analogies were too much to bear so the people rose up to throw Jesus off a cliff. It is possible that this was intended to be a prelude to a stoning.

Jesus uttered no curse against them, nor spoke an angry word. In complete composure He simply passed through their midst.

Simeon prophesied that His coming would bring "light for revelation to the Gentiles" (Lk. 2:32), but this would be fulfilled in an unexpected manner; it was the resistance of Israel that would cause their own downfall and send the gospel into the Gentile world.

As Edwards says,

We should not be surprised if Jesus was rejected by outsiders and enemies. The unsettling truth of the story is that the greatest danger to the way of God in this world is posed by those who are closest to it. Jesus is rejected not in Sodom and Gomorrah, but in Nazareth. He is betrayed not by the devil, but by one of the Twelve whom He chose. He is crucified not in pagan Rome, but in the heart of Israel at Jerusalem. The rejection of Jesus repeats the rejection of God in the history of Israel, whose ultimate adversary was not Baal worship or foreign nations, but "my own people who are bent on turning from me, declares the Lord" (Hosea 11:7). Jesus came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him (Jn. 1:11; Edwards, 142).

Garland adds:

What happens in Nazareth prepares for what will happen in Jerusalem. Prophets do not preach to those who already agree with them and do not deal in flattery and soft-soap to win high ratings. They declare what God will do and what God requires. They speak the truth that people often do not want to hear. This rubs against the grain of culture that treats religion as a consumer item. Those who adjust the word of God to meet market trends, assuming the customer is always right, are simply peddlers (2 Cor 2:17). Those who come to religion assuming that the chief goal of God is to glorify humankind and asking, "What will it all get me?" receive only spiritual chaff. Like the Nazareth gathering, people of any culture are tempted to focus only on themselves rather than on God. Prophets speaking the truth as often met with misunderstanding, staggering hardships, and bloody violence as with the warm welcome. They may be crushed, but the message will not (Garland, 208).

Teaching in the Synagogue in Capernaum Authenticated by the Healing of a Demoniac - Luke 4:31-37

4:31 And He came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and He was teaching them on the Sabbath;

4:32 and they were amazed at His teaching, for His message was with authority.

4:33 In the synagogue there was a man possessed by the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice,

4:34 "Let us alone! What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are-- the Holy One of God!"

4:35 But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet and come out of him!" And when the demon had thrown him down in the midst of the people, he came out of him without doing him any harm.

4:36 And amazement came upon them all, and they began talking with one another saying, "What is this message? For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits and they come out."

4:37 And the report about Him was spreading into every locality in the surrounding district.

Jesus' experience in Capernaum contrasts His earlier experience in Nazareth (4:16-30). There He was rejected as a prophet and His teaching was ignored; In Capernaum the people were amazed at His teaching and recognized that He taught with authority (4:32); when the miraculous happened they asked "What is this message?" (4:35). In Nazareth Jesus was simply seen as the Son of Joseph; in Capernaum He was called the Holy One of God. In Nazareth they sought a miracle and didn't receive one; in Capernaum they were not seeking a miracle and one came their way.

In Nazareth when Jesus was in the synagogue, He had read from the scroll of Isaiah: "*The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*" (Luke 4:17-19, cf. Isa. 61:1 ff. – cf. Sec. 45). The incident of the demoniac Luke gives in 4:33-35 exemplifies this liberating work.

It is significant that Jesus is confronted with demonic activity early in His ministry. The preaching of the kingdom of God (Lk. 4:19, 43) signaled an attack on the forces of wickedness. A holy war had begun and the demonic world knew it (Lk. 4:34). Jesus had come to destroy the power of the devil (1 Jn. 3:8) and the demon knew it. The question, "Have you come to destroy us?" could just as well be translated as a statement, "You have come to destroy us!" (cf. Mk. 1:34).

"The demons recognized – far more clearly than the synagogue congregation – the role of judgment in the ministry of Jesus" (Liefeld, 627). In their arrogance the Jews thought they could throw Jesus off a cliff (4:28-29); "the demons believe and shudder" (Ja. 2:19).

Jesus needed no magical formulas or even a prayer to exorcise the demon. He simply commanded the demon to be quiet and come out of the man. (Lk. 4:35). With that, "the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him." (Lk. 4:35).

On numerous occasions Jesus forbade the premature proclamation of His identity. Jesus wanted His messianic works to validate His claim to messiahship to believers (cf. Lk. 7:18-23). Though He was the Holy One of God, the preconceived notions of the people would impose upon Him a misinterpretation of His role as Messiah. They desired a Messiah who would be a political, military leader that would defeat Rome.

Luke had noted that earlier in Jesus' ministry, "all spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips" (Lk. 4:22). The casting out of the demon draws a different, more powerful reaction from the people. They were not only amazed at His words, but also with the power with which He spoke and the authority He possessed (Lk. 4:32, 36). He did not teach as the scribes (i.e. the scholars of the day who were professionally trained in the interpretation and application of the law - Mk. 1:22), but as One whose authority had come from God. The obedience of the demonic world to His word authenticated the authority He had.

See Edwards 142-143 for an idea of what Capernaum was like at that time.

Peter's Mother-in-Law and Others Healed - Luke 4:38-41

4:38 Then He got up and left the synagogue, and entered Simon's home. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Him to help her.

4:39 And standing over her, He rebuked the fever, and it left her; and she immediately got up and waited on them.

4:40 While the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and laying His hands on each one of them, He was healing them.

4:41 Demons also were coming out of many, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But rebuking them, He would not allow them to speak, because they knew Him to be the Christ.

The same day that Jesus had cast out the demon (cf. Sec. 48) He went to Peter's home. "Peter was married (1 Cor. 9:5) and had moved with his brother Andrew from their home in Bethsaida (Jn. 1:44) to Capernaum, possibly to remain near Jesus (Matt. 4:13)" (Carson, 204). When Jesus entered his home, He

found his mother-in-law to be sick with a fever. A fever was considered a disease in that day, not a symptom (Carson, 204). A Jew was forbidden to touch anyone in such a condition, but Jesus healed her with a touch. "As in v. 3 [*i.e. Matt. 8:3*], the touch did not defile the healer but healed the defiled." (Carson, 204). The healing was miraculous and instantaneous, for Jesus' authority immediately accomplished His will. Peter's mother-in-law rose at once with energy to serve them (Lk. 4:39).

"When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: "He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases." (Matthew 8:16-17)

Because the context is still the Sabbath (Mk. 1:29; Lk. 4:31, 38), which began at dusk on Friday night and ended at the same time on Saturday, it appears that the people waited until the Sabbath was over (i.e. "when evening came" NIV; "when the sun was setting" NASB) before they began flocking to Jesus again. "In the remaining hours of diminishing light, they perform the labor of love they could not do on the Sabbath, carrying the sick to Jesus" (Liefeld, 873).

The work of Messiah involved destroying the kingdom of Satan and its effects upon God's creation (Isa. 11:1-5; 35:5-6). The effects of sin include sickness, suffering, and death. Sickness may be a direct result of sin (Jn. 5:15; I Cor. 11:30) or may not (Jn. 9:2-3), but all sickness stems from sin and will not be a part of the eternal state (Rev. 21:4). Christ's healings signaled that the "year of the Lord's favor" (Lk. 4:19, cf. Sec. 45) was approaching and gave men a taste of the conditions that would be present in the kingdom of God. However, the fact that Jesus takes our infirmities also leads us to the cross, for the way that He bears our sickness is through His suffering and death (cf. I Pet. 2:24; see Carson, 205-206 for more details).

Tour of Galilee with Simon and Others - Luke 4:42-44

4:42 When day came, Jesus left and went to a secluded place; and the crowds were searching for Him, and came to Him and tried to keep Him from going away from them.

4:43 But He said to them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose."

4:44 So He kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

"Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!" Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else--to the nearby villages--so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." (Mark 1:35-38).

After a busy night of healings and exorcisms, Jesus got up early in the morning to pray. In the other two places in the gospel of Mark where Jesus is seen praying it is in the context of crisis. Here, the crisis is the shallow and superficial response to Jesus. The people only cared about their physical needs, so Jesus sought the comfort and direction of the Father. It's worth noting that in times of busyness, prayer is often the first thing to be neglected, but it was during those times that Jesus sensed a greater need of solace with the Father.

Jesus did not come to simply meet physical needs; He came with a far greater mission. He had to preach the gospel of the kingdom, for that was why He had been sent (Lk. 4:43). Miracles and exorcisms had their place, but Jesus would not let them override His primary purpose for coming.

“Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them.” (Matthew 4:23-24)

Galilee is a relatively small area, about 40 miles wide and 70 miles long. But according to the Jewish historian, Josephus, who wrote a generation later, Galilee had about 204 cities and villages each with more than 15,000 people. If Jesus and His disciples could visit two or three a day, it would take them a good three months to go to them all. Jesus must have had tremendous endurance.